

8 | Recommendations

Parking strategy recommendations have been defined for the Ninth Street study area based on observations, analysis of existing parking data, community stakeholder outreach, peer city interviews, and PST input. These strategies are designed to address existing and future demand in the study area and are intended to represent a toolbox of available solutions that could be implemented based upon ability and opportunity. Some solutions should be easily and quickly achieved, while others will likely require a larger commitment of resources and cooperation of others.

The strategies for the Ninth Street study area are organized into three different categories—short-term, mid-term, and long-term. The short-term category is recommendations for immediate implementation within the next 6 months, the mid-term category is recommendations for implementation between 6 months and 18 months, and the long-term category is recommendations for implementation beyond the 18 month timeframe.

Many of the recommendations are inter-related and as such, during implementation, other recommendations may require re-defining or re-prioritization. The City should consider this parking study report a tool, with the understanding that periodic updates (every 1 – 3 years) may be required to appropriately react and respond to a developing community. The parking strategies recommended for implementation within the Ninth Street study are further defined in the remainder of this section.

Short Term (< 6 months)

- Stripe on-street spaces

Currently, the Ninth Street study area only has a handful of on-street parking spaces (primarily accessible parking) that are striped, while the overwhelming majority of the study area has no delineation of on-street spaces. Leaving on-street parking without space delineation could result in inefficient use of the curb face, resulting in underutilized parking supply. While this is possible, the larger benefit to delineating on-street parking is that it creates order on a block face, thus easier operation and parking management. For these reasons, it is recommended to stripe on-street spaces on the following streets:

- Ninth Street (including motorcycle spaces where appropriate) – Main Street to Green Street
- Perry Street – Ninth Street to Broad Street
- Markham Avenue – Ninth Street to Broad Street
- Iredell Street – Main Street to Markham Avenue

These streets were chosen, as they represent the locations that immediately surround the businesses that draw parking demand to the study area.

- Markham Avenue on-street parking

Currently, Markham Avenue is aligned with a continuous two-way left turn lane between Ninth Street and Iredell Street. This current alignment is not an efficient use of the roadway width. As such, it is recommended to restripe the two-way turn lanes for left turning traffic onto Ninth Street and onto Iredell Street, allowing implementation of on-street parking on Markham Avenue. Depending on the length of striped space, this recommendation could add between 8 and 12 on-street spaces to the study area. On-street parking is in high demand for visitors and is important to business owners within the Ninth Street study area. Providing more on-street spaces is aimed to reduce the perception of insufficient parking within the study area.

- On-street time limits & enforcement

The off-street City-owned surface lot is expected to be converted from a time restricted to a paid parking lot. This will have an adverse impact on the on-street parking spaces, as it will push users to free on-street spaces. Considering this and the realistic timing of implementing a paid on-street program (which is recommended), the on-street spaces in the Ninth Street study area should be converted from a 3 hour to a 2 hour time restriction to help encourage turnover, during the time in which the City plans for and implements paid on-street parking. In addition, considering its immediate adjacency to the study area, on-street parking along Broad Street between West Main Street and West Markham Street should be time restricted to 2 hours as well to inhibit all day parking.

Furthermore, to help ensure that the on-street and off-street parking systems work in unison, enforcement within the Ninth Street study area and along Broad Street should be heightened to limit those that abuse on-street parking time restrictions.

- Employee Parking

Employees that work within the study area frequently occupy prime visitor parking spaces (on-street and the City leased off-street lot on Ninth Street). This may discourage visitors from the Ninth Street area since convenient parking can be difficult to find, especially during peak times. To minimize the impact that employees have on the convenient spaces, it is recommended that the City seek a partnership with Duke University that would allow free public use of a portion of the off-street lot on Hillsborough Road (adjacent and to the west of the study area). Preliminary discussions with representatives of Duke University have indicated they would be willing to allow public parking in this lot during nights and weekends.

It is likely that an agreement to use approximately 30 spaces for employees of Ninth Street businesses would have a positive impact on the study area. If this agreement can be reached, employers within the study area should encourage their employees to use this parking, rather than the convenient spaces along Ninth Street.

The City is researching the possibility of implementing an employee permit parking program on Iredell Street. This program, which would be similar to a neighborhood parking program, would allow vehicles displaying valid parking permits to park on Iredell Street for a period longer than the posted time limit. The Department of Transportation has requested an opinion from the City Attorney's office regarding legal issues associated with the implementation of such a program. If the program does proceed, there are a number of issues to resolve including who is the permit holder (the individual or business owner), enforcement, program costs and fees, and possible limits on how many and to who permits are distributed.

- Wells Fargo parking agreement

Located mid-block on Perry Street, between Ninth Street and Iredell Street, is an off-street lot that is owned by Wells Fargo. This lot is restricted to private, employee use only. However, this lot is gated and unable to be used. It was noted by some stakeholders that this lot has remained vacant for years. Given that this off-street lot is located immediately adjacent to the Ninth Street businesses, it is prime parking that currently goes unused. It is recommended that the City or the Ninth Street merchants seek an agreement with Wells Fargo that would allow public use of this lot. An agreement with Wells Fargo also could include considerations for using this lot, or the lot surrounding Wells Fargo on the corner of Ninth Street and West Main Street, for

restaurant valet parking, thus providing additional parking supply to the study area and a new service that can be offered to visitors.

- Restripe crosswalk

Mid-block on Ninth Street, between West Markham Avenue and Perry Street, is a pedestrian crosswalk providing connection from the City owned off-street lot to the east side of the street where the restaurant and retail businesses are located. The crosswalk paint is aging and is faded and chipping in several locations. It is recommended that the City restripe this crosswalk to maintain the intended high visibility to drivers.

Medium Term (6 months – 18 months)

- Implement paid on-street parking

To continue to encourage healthy turnover of valuable on-street parking spaces, it is recommended that the City implement a paid on-street parking program that is concurrent with a similar program in the Downtown study area. With the knowledge that the City leased off-street lot on Ninth Street is expected to be converted from a time restricted to a paid parking lot, it is highly recommended to do the same for on-street parking in the Ninth Street study area. Having paid off-street parking without a paid on-street system will result in pushing patrons to the on-street system, likely resulting in lower parking turnover and increased traffic within the study area, as visitors will tend to circle the block looking for a free space. While it is recommended to implement paid on-street parking as soon as possible within the study area, it is understood that several steps are required prior to doing so. These steps include evaluating and selecting the technology for revenue collection that best fits the needs of the City and timing implementation so that it aligns with implementation of paid on-street parking in the Downtown study area. The technology that is likely to be the best fit for the City is a pay-by-cell phone option, paired with pay stations and scratch-off tickets that can be used by those without cellphones, thus maximizing user convenience. It is recommended that the City perform a separate, focused study on available technologies prior to selection and implementation. It is further recommended that the technology and equipment selected and implemented in the Ninth Street study area should be identical to that of the Downtown Study Area to increase familiarity and decrease confusion for users.

The hourly rate to be charged for on-street parking should be considered in relation to the rate being charged in the off-street surface lot. To help ensure the off-street and on-street systems are working together, the hourly rate for on-street parking should exceed that of the off-street rate. Given current parking rates within the City, region, and state, it is recommended to charge \$1.00 per hour for off-street parking and \$1.25 per hour for on-street parking. This should be further discussed and approved by the City and PST prior to implementation.

It is estimated that on-street paid parking revenues could be between approximately \$140,000 and \$220,000 per year over the 10-year timeframe considered, with the exception of the year of installation due to up front capital cost of \$200,000.

- 1 or 2 hour free in City-owned off-street lot

Best practices for parking management suggest that for a vibrant and successful paid on-street system to exist, an incentive should be considered to attract long-term users to off-street facilities, typically through a 1 or 2 hour free program. The City could consider this in the future for the off-street lot along Ninth Street; however, based on projections indicated in this report, demand within the study area could be such that this type of program is not required to obtain a successful on-street system.

- Remove “NC 70 Business” designation

An item brought to light by stakeholders within the study area is that Ninth Street is currently designated by the North Carolina Department of Transportation as “US 70 Business.” This results in increased traffic, including large trucks, passing through the study area. Ninth Street should act as a destination. However, with this route designation, pass through traffic will continue, thus increasing unwanted activity on the street and negatively impacting the safety of those that are walking within the study area and crossing Ninth Street. In an attempt to negate these negative impacts, it is recommended that the City continue efforts with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to remove or relocate the “US 70 Business” designation from Ninth Street. In discussions with the PST of this issue, a potential recommended alternate for “US 70 Business” could be to continue the route along Main Street to the northwest and merging back in with the existing route at its intersection with Hillsborough Road.

- Parking Lease Agreements

Several proposed developments in the Ninth Street area are planned, with unknown timeframes for implementation. For example, the Ninth Street North development located at the corner of Ninth Street and Green Street is an example of a project with the potential to share parking with the Ninth Street businesses. During the development review process, the City and developer should discuss the possibility of sharing parking with other Ninth Street businesses.

Long Term (18 months+)

- Establish Parking Enterprise Zone

Transitioning to a paid parking program, in many cases comes with some community push back. The thought is usually “I never had to pay for parking here before, why do I have to now?” A successful response to this is to commit the net parking revenues to improvements within the area in which they were collected. For instance, revenues collected from the Ninth Street study area could be reused for 8 Alley improvements, Ninth Street sidewalk improvements, lighting upgrades, and streetscape and landscaping improvements. This is successfully integrated in other cities through Parking Enterprise Zones and more importantly is something that was well received by Ninth Street stakeholders. It is recommended that the City investigate implementing a Parking Enterprise Zone within the Ninth Street study area, thus allocating collected parking revenues to “local” improvements.

- Improve 8 Alley

Currently, a large supply of on-street parking within the study area is located one block east of Ninth Street on Iredell Street. Those that park in this location are required to either walk all the

way around the block or through the 8 Alley (located between Regulator Bookstore and Vaguely Reminiscent). Given the long walking distance around the block, most choose the 8 Alley, which is not paved and very poorly lit. These negative characteristics will typically detract patrons, thus pushing users to the highly used Ninth Street on- and off-street spaces. To better utilize more of the on-street parking within the study area, specifically those spaces along Iredell Street, it is recommended to improve the 8 Alley to include a paved surface, pedestrian level lighting, and wayfinding signage. Figures 7.1 and 7.2 are renderings of potential improvements to the 8 Alley.

It should be noted that current City right of way along 8 Alley does not extend all the way to Ninth Street. Rather, there is an approximate 10' strip between the Regulator Bookstore and Vaguely Reminiscent that is privately owned. As a result, improvements to the 8 Alley, particularly at the intersection with Ninth Street, would require an encroachment agreement with the adjacent building owners. Based on preliminary conversations with stakeholders and business owners, it is not anticipated that there would be many challenges for the City in implementing improvements along 8 Alley related to property owner agreements.

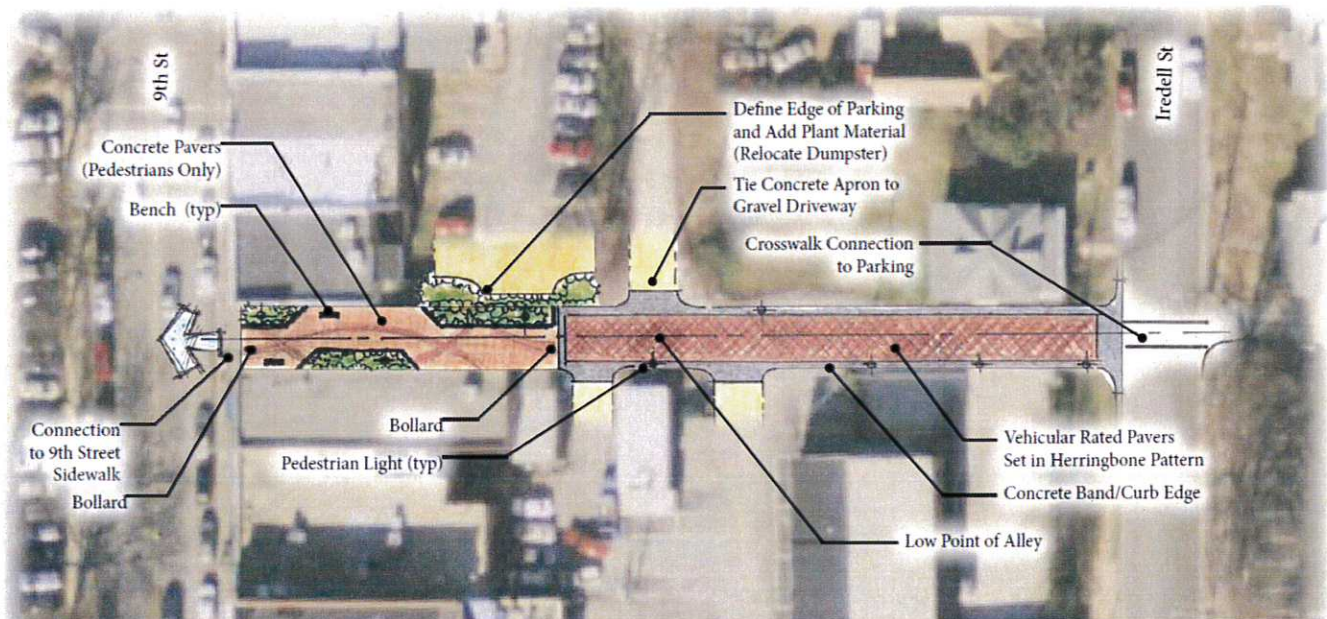


Figure 7.1 – 8 Alley Plan View Rendering

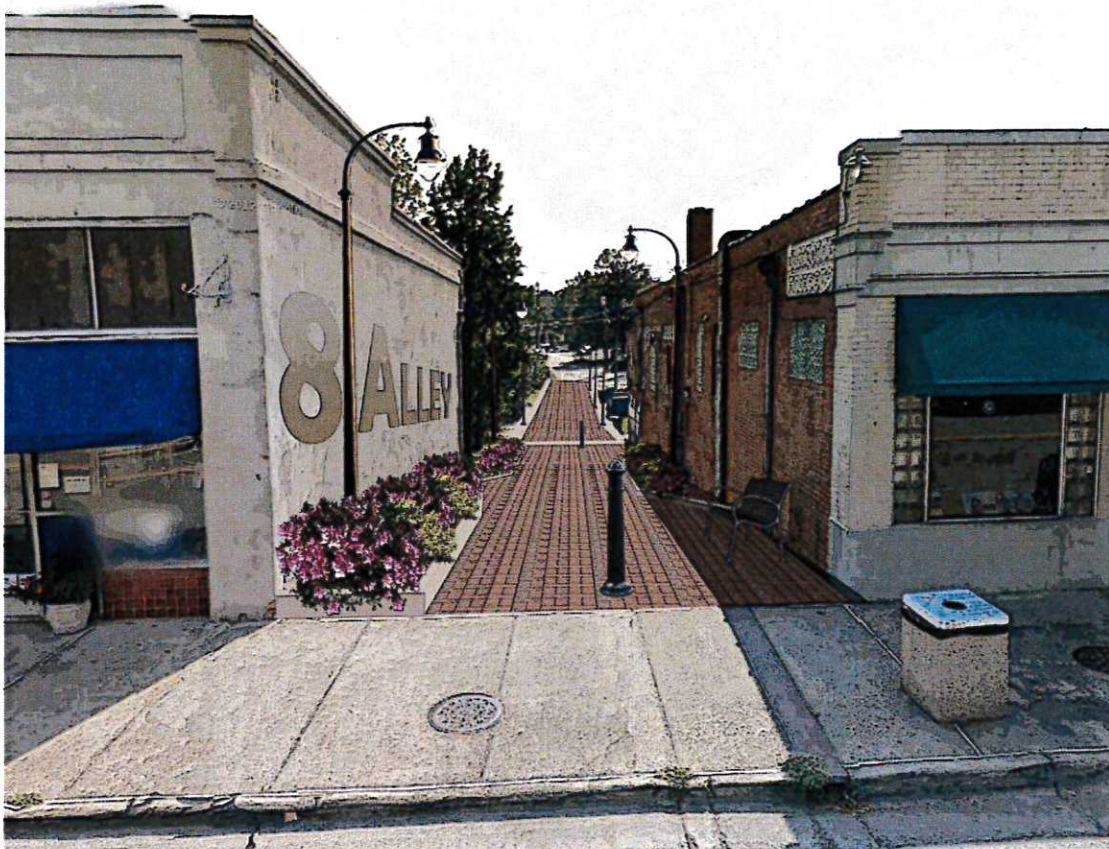


Figure 7.2 – 8 Alley Perspective (Ninth Street Looking East)

- **Pave 9 Alley**

Many deliveries to businesses are made from Ninth Street, thus blocking parking spaces for users, in addition to providing a crowded sidewalk condition while the deliveries are made. The current condition of 8 and 9 Alleys, located behind the Ninth Street businesses, mid-block between Ninth Street and Iredell Street, are such that deliveries are difficult as a result of uneven terrain and ponding. It is recommended that the 9 Alley be paved, signed and striped appropriately for deliveries. This will free up more of the prime on-street spaces for visitors to the study area and given its width, additional parking supply could be obtained through parallel parking along the alley. Improvements to 9 Alley could be funded through the previously recommended Parking Enterprise Zone.

- **Additional Off-Street Parking Supply**

A potential location for additional off-street parking supply is the currently vacant lot bounded by Hillsborough Road, Gin Street, Carolina Avenue, and Hale Street. This parcel is approximately 275 feet by 70 feet and could accommodate approximately one bay of parking and approximately 60 vehicles. However, this parcel is located approximately 1,900 feet from the center of Ninth Street. This distance is too far from Ninth Street to provide parking for visitors, but could provide employee parking for existing and future development.